



CTYBC TIPS for birding the Gulf Coast

DUCKS

Ducks most commonly found in April on Mustang Island: Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck.

Other ducks that winter in the area and could be seen are: Mottled Duck, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser

Black-bellied Whistling Ducks are often seen in groups at the edges of ponds, or flying overhead while whistling their unusual call. Their red bill and neck, black belly, and white stripe on the upper wing surface in flight are noticeable.

Mallard males are easy to identify in breeding season with their green heads and yellow bills, but the females are more difficult. Look for an orange bill with dark center, orange legs, and a dark line through the eye. In flight they both have a blue speculum bordered by white bars.

Northern Shoveler is easy to identify even far away because of the very large, shovel-shaped bill. Males have a green head, white neck and rufous flanks.

Blue-winged Teals are easiest to identify in flight because of the large white patch on the upper wing surface. Males have a dark head with a white crescent just above the bill. Females are plainer and it is hard to see the pale crescent. They have a dark line through the eye like a mallard but have a black bill.

Male **Ruddy Ducks** have an unmistakable sky blue bill in breeding season, and are red with a black head and white cheeks. The females have the black heads but a dark line through the white cheek.

When learning ducks, start with males in the breeding season and assume the drab females nearest them are the same species if you can't see any distinguishing features to suggest otherwise.

Watch out for the speculum color to shift from green to purple as the bird turns in the sun—it can make you misidentify ducks that have this feature.
